

translated into 57 different languages (including 24 from Asia), this letter, written by Brother Roger of Taizé, was made public during the young adult European meeting in Hamburg. It will be a starting-point for reflection throughout the year 2004 during the weekly meetings in Taizé as well as those held in other parts of the world.

Letter from Taizé

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To the Wellsprings of Joy

Letter 2004

1 A deepening of the inner life, far from leading us to shut our eyes to the situation of present-day societies, is a call to become better informed. Are we aware, for example, that 54 countries in the world are poorer today than they were in 1990? Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, wrote to us last year on the occasion of the European meeting in Paris, "There are too many young people in the world who are deprived of prospects for the future. For them, each day is a bitter struggle against starvation, illness and misery. In addition, many live in regions which are prey to armed conflicts. We have to do everything we can to give them hope."

2 The beloved Pope John XXIII wrote in 1963, "Every believer must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow human beings; and he will be this all the more perfectly the more closely he lives in communion with God. In fact, there can be no peace between humans unless there is peace within each one of them." (*Pacem in terris*, 164-165)

3 The apostle Paul encouraged believers to be "points of light," shining like stars in the world (see Philippians 2:15-16).

4 "When the Lord comes the lowly shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the neediest people shall exult" (Isaiah 9:18-19). "Console your heart, chase sorrow far away; for sorrow is of no use to anybody" (Sirach 30:21-25).

So many young people all across the earth carry within them a yearning for peace, for communion and for joy.

They are also mindful of the untold suffering of the innocent. They know all too well that poverty in the world is on the rise.¹

It is not only the leaders of nations who build the world of tomorrow. The most obscure and humble people can play a part in bringing about a future of peace and trust.

However powerless we may seem to be, God enables us to bring reconciliation where there are oppositions and hope where there is anxiety. God calls us to make his compassion for human beings accessible by the way we live.²

If young people live lives focused on peace, a light will shine wherever they may be.³

I asked a young man one day what he felt was most essential to keep him going in life. His reply was: "Joy and kind-heartedness."

Worry and the fear of suffering can take away our joy.

When a joy drawn from the Gospel wells up in us, it brings with it a breath of new life.

We are not the ones who create this joy; it is a gift from God. It is constantly renewed by the look of trust with which God regards our life.⁴

Kind-heartedness is not gullible; it requires us to be vigilant. It can lead us to take risks. It leaves no room for looking down on others.⁵

It makes us attentive to the very poorest, to those in distress, to the suffering of children. It lets us show, by the look on our face or by the tone of our voice, that every human being needs to be loved.⁶

Yes, God enables us to make our way forward with a spark of goodness in the depths of our soul, a spark which asks only to burst into flame.⁷

But how can we go to the wellsprings of kindness, of joy, and also to the wellsprings of trust?

We find the way by surrendering ourselves to God.

As far back as we look in history, multitudes of believers have known that, through prayer, God brings a light, a life within.

Even before Christ, a believer prayed, "My soul longs for you in the night, Lord; my spirit within me is seeking you."⁸

The desire for communion with God has been set within the human heart since the dawn of time. The mystery of that communion touches what is most intimate in us, reaching down to the very depths of our being.

And so we can say to Christ, "To whom would we go but to you? You have the words that bring our soul back to life."⁹

Remaining before God in contemplative waiting is not something beyond our grasp.

As we pray in this way, a veil covering the inexpressible realities of faith is lifted. And what lies beyond words leads to adoration.

God is also present when fervor fades and when all perceptible resonance vanishes. We are never deprived of his compassion. It is not that God remains distant from us; we are the ones who at times are absent.

⁵ Kind-heartedness is invaluable in community life. It may be one of the clearest reflections of the beauty of a communion.

⁶ When they are still quite young, children can grasp what it means to have a mother or father, a sister or brother who is kind-hearted. That is a clear reality of the Gospel. It is so important for children to know that they are loved; it makes them able to keep going far their whole life long, and to understand that God calls us to love in our turn.

⁷ During a visit to Taizé, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur said, "Goodness is deeper than the deepest evil. However radical evil may be, it is not as deep as goodness."

⁸ Isaiah 26:9.

⁹ When some people began to leave Christ, he asked his disciples, "Do you want to leave too?" Peter replied, "To whom else would we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:67-68)

Pope John Paul II

The Pope greets you warmly, dear young people who have responded to the invitation of the Taizé Community and are meeting in Hamburg this year. He encourages you to take the time to discover, in the depths of your heart, the desire for life and happiness that is within you. The Lord wants to help you to grow constantly, in order to become "perfect in Christ" (cf. Col 1:28). He also calls you to turn towards your brothers and sisters, to recognize in each one the face of the Lord. This way of looking helps to create fraternal relationships and to give confidence to those who are often the most disregarded and forgotten in society.

When you contemplate the Cross of the Savior, you can discover the greatness of God's love for every human being. Your mission consists in acting in such a way that all human beings become to a greater extent each day a people of brothers and sisters, where each one is recognized not for what he has but for what he is. Follow the advice of Saint Gregory of Nyssa: "Do not keep everything for yourselves, but share with the poor, who are God's favored ones. Everything belongs to God, our common Father. And we are all brothers and sisters in the same family" (*On Love for the Poor*).

May you always look at others, and yourselves, in the same way that Jesus himself looks at every human being, with tenderness, mercy and forgiveness, a look that sets people on the road of life and opens a future full of hope. In this way you will discover that "forgiving our brothers and sisters disposes us to pray" (Origen, *Prayer*, no. 8) and to meet the Lord.

By the intercession of Our Lady, the Pope prays that God may bless you, who are taking part in the meeting in Hamburg. The Holy Father also blesses the Taizé Community, the organizers of the gathering as well as the Christian communities and families who are offering you hospitality.

Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow

I greet you with heartfelt joy, as you meet in Hamburg to pray and to encourage yourselves mutually in faith and in searching, on the narrow road in the steps of Christ. "To you grace and peace in abundance, through the knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus, our Lord" (2 Peter 1:2).

Every meeting organized by the Taizé Community in the period between the celebrations of Christmas in the West and in the East becomes a unique opportunity for young European Christians, as well as those from other continents, to gather together. They are animated by a spiritual impulse to experience the inestimable gift of personal encounter, and to feel the invisible presence of our Lord who was born, who died and who is risen.

In our day, when it is so easy for human beings to lose the inner foundations of life, to give in to the temptation to "be like everybody else," to abandon the demanding call of the Gospel in order to adapt to current fashions, it is more important than ever to share our hope with those who are at our side, to warm their souls by a few words of love and faith, to attest by our actions to the eternal truth of the Gospel.

"Always be joyful, pray constantly, and for all things give thanks... Do not stifle the Spirit. Test everything and hold on to what is good": that is the road proposed to us according to the words of the apostle Paul (1 Thess 5:16-21). May the Lord himself strengthen you and accompany you on this beautiful pilgrimage!

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan

Dear friends of Taizé and of the entire world, the news that reaches us from the four corners of the planet is often far from encouraging. In the developed lands, the job crisis, the decline of social protection and the rise of intolerance causes inequality to grow, and millions of men and women—young and old, handicapped persons, migrants and refugees—are banished to the edge of society, deprived of the means to live a decent life. In many developing countries, grinding poverty, violence, war and illness, in particular AIDS, continue to be the daily lot of millions of innocent women and men.

In the face of this dark picture it is easy to become discouraged and to lose confidence in the future. But that would mean forgetting the progress that has been made, for example in the struggle against poverty and hunger, in the field of literacy training and in public health, or in the prevention of armed conflicts. It would mean forgetting those thanks to whom this progress has been realized and those who continue to give themselves each day without holding anything back to help their fellow human beings. It would above all mean forgetting the creative power that can be born from a dream that is shared and from the union of people of good will.

Over half a century ago, in the difficult years following the Second World War, the United Nations Organization was founded to help the peoples of the world to live better. More than ever, we need the commitment and the energy of all, in particular the young, to realize the hopes that the UN incarnates. During the Millenium Summit Meeting in September 2000, the member states committed themselves to do all in their power to free the world from misery, illness and the scourge of war and to preserve the resources of our planet for future generations.

It is up to governments, of course, to make sure that these commitments are kept, but they cannot achieve this alone. It is important that you young people, who will one day have to manage the problems of the world, also become active. As those who are most concerned, you have to make your voices heard concerning the future of our planet and become aware of all that you can do to make this world better. Every contribution counts, no matter how small.

It is in this spirit of solidarity that I wish a fruitful meeting for you. All my best wishes are with you for this new stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth."

Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople

In the tumult of the troubled times humanity is undergoing, we have heard, like the breath of a gentle breeze bearing hope, the encouraging news of the 26th young adult European meeting in Hamburg organized by the Taizé Community.

We wish that as many young people as possible may take part in this meeting, from all the countries of Europe and from other continents. May they get to know one another, may they speak together about the hope that is in them. "Strangers" perhaps, even "heterodox," may they look at each other with the smile of friendship: it blossoms, innocent and close to the source, only on the faces of children and the young. And may each one recognize in >

JOHANNINE
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Jesus proclaimed God's Reign or Kingdom. Still more: he made visible the first signs of its coming. If God reigns, then evil, suffering, sin and absurdity are no longer in charge. Praise and gratitude replace lamentation, bitterness and weeping. The one who announces the coming of the Kingdom and introduces it into the world leaves people in his wake who sing and express their joy. If God reigns, then creation is healed and can find meaning once again. People stand up and walk. A communion with the God of life and joy is re-established.

To experience the reign of love, a forgiveness stronger than evil, a love stronger than death, is the most moving experience imaginable. When they open themselves to Christ, believers taste a deepened faith; they glimpse signs of God's reign in their lives and in those of others. They do not see the Kingdom, for evil and death are still present, but the signs they witness tell them that nothing can resist its coming. It is understandable that Jesus compares the existence of the Kingdom to the overwhelming joy that takes hold of someone who discovered a treasure hidden in a field (Matthew 13:44).

If the discovery of the treasure is sudden and unexpected—someone ploughing a field does not expect to find a treasure—it nevertheless takes time to evaluate what was discovered and draw the consequences. That is what the man in the parable does by hiding the treasure again. Soon his reflection will lead him to act. In this way it has been said correctly that in this short parable the three dimensions of time are found: the present with the discovery of the treasure, the past that the man contemplates by evaluating what has value in the light of the treasure he has found, a new future to which the man commits himself by his decision to buy the field.

- Have I already had an experience that changed radically the way I saw life and its priorities?
- Joy is the foundation of the important decisions that the man in the parable will take. What does this insistence of Jesus on joy reveal to us?

Why was this man born blind? Jesus is asked this question by disciples convinced that there is a link between the condition of the man born blind and his behavior or that of his parents. Seeing things in this way places God on the side of the causes, makes him responsible for reality as it is, including the evil that mars it. It was tempting to see things in such a simple fashion. But already at the time of the First Testament, people realized that this kind of answer, even if it served the cause of monotheism, was insufficient and posed as many problems as it solved.

Jesus' words are categorical: "Neither he nor his parents sinned." The activity of his Father cannot be the cause of a misfortune or a punishment for sin. His Father is always at work, but this work is always on the side of life. That is where we have to look for it. Jesus substitutes a different link than that which people want to make between God and misfortune—the link with life, or rather, the link with a combat so that life will come out on top.

Instead of giving an explanation, an abstract answer to a "why?" John's Gospel places us in front of someone who is exposed, fragile, ready to give his life. In this respect, chapter 9 is appropriately followed by chapter 10 where Jesus speaks of a shepherd who gives his life for his sheep, the life he came to bring to the full.

Whys can remain. But, when we contemplate the Father who reveals himself in the life of Christ, doubts concerning God are no longer possible. God cannot be understood as a mere spectator of the human adventure. He has committed himself totally to it, giving the most precious reality he has in a hand-to-hand struggle with evil and death. God does not save humanity from death and evil in all its forms by waving a magic wand, but rather by giving himself.

- How is our image of God transformed by this Bible text?
- What other Bible texts or scenes from Christ's life can help us to understand that God has waged a combat to allow life and joy to triumph?

the other the "neighbor" of Christ's teaching, the "brother or sister," co-heir of a common responsibility for human affairs—affairs small and great, local and general, European and worldwide, those of today and those of eternity.

Whoever reaches out a hand to help the young, or at least wishes to do so, is worthy of praise and blessed.

Our paternal wish for all is that lasting may be the friendship between them and everlasting the love of Christ and the salvation which proceeds from his Incarnation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams

Sisters and brothers in Christ: as you gather in Hamburg from many different countries for what I pray will be a time of deepening unity, as you worship God together and reflect on what it means for you to live as followers of Jesus Christ in a world that knows too much poverty, injustice and violence, I send my greetings and the promise of my prayers.

At this Christmas season we celebrate the gift of God in Christ. In Him, the Word made flesh, we see true humanity. In Him we see our true selves as God would re-

create us, not seeking security in power and status, but freely giving ourselves in the service of others. Christmas speaks to us of the possibilities which God opens up for the whole human family, possibilities of a new way of living. Those who have been grasped by the gift we celebrate at Christmas will seek day by day to make those possibilities real in their own lives and in the lives of their communities.

And as you return from Hamburg to your homes and the challenges of a new year, "may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit".

Letter from Taizé

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MARCH

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

- 1 Mon** Is 50:7-9 The Lord is coming to my help. Who then can condemn me?
- 2 Tue** Lk 21:5-19 Jesus said to his disciples: You will be persecuted because of my name. But make up your mind not to worry about how to defend yourselves, for I shall give you words and wisdom.
- 3 Wed** Mt 26:36-46 Jesus said to his disciples: Stay alert and pray in order to withstand the trial. The spirit is willing, but human nature is weak.
- 4 Thu** 1 K 8:22-40 Solomon prayed: Listen, Lord, forgive and act; deal with every person according to all they do, since you know their heart — you alone know the heart of everyone.
- 5 Fri** Rm 4:18-25 St. Paul writes: Though there seemed to be no hope, Abraham hoped and believed, being fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised.
- 6 Sat** 1 Th 1:1-5 Paul writes to the Thessalonians: We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 7 SUN** Lk 9:28-36 Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed. Then a cloud enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud saying: This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him.
- 8 Mon** Dt 30:15-20 Choose life: loving the Lord your God, listening to the Lord's voice, holding fast to him — for in this your life consists.
- 9 Tue** Mt 4:1-11 Jesus said to the tempter: It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."
- 10 Wed** St 30:21-25 Trick the cares that weigh upon you, console your heart, chase sorrow far away, for sorrow is no use to anyone.
- 11 Thu** 1 Co 10:12-13 God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. But when you are tempted, God will give you the means to stand up to it and will show you a way forward.
- 12 Fri** Mt 9:10-13 Jesus said: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. Indeed, I have come not to call the just, but sinners.
- 13 Sat** Mk 10:2-16 Jesus said: In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.
- 14 SUN** Ex 3:1-15 The Lord says: I have seen the misery of my people. I have heard their crying out because of their oppressors, yes, I know their suffering and I have come down to rescue them.
- 15 Mon** Rm 13:11-14 Paul writes: Let us put aside the deeds of darkness. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 16 Tue** Jn 6:22-29 Jesus said: Do not work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures for eternal life.
- 17 Wed** Ga 6:1-10 Bear each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.
- 18 Thu** Mt 20:24-28 Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the forgiveness of many.
- 19 Fri** Mt 1:16-21 St. JOSEPH An angel said to Joseph: Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.
- 20 Sat** Jn 14:18-21 Jesus said to his disciples: In a short time the world will no longer see me, but you will see that I live and you will also live.
- 21 SUN** Lk 15:1-32 Jesus said: There is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.
- 22 Mon** Mk 12:28-34 Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. These are the two greatest commandments.
- 23 Tue** Am 8:11 The days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall send hunger upon the land; not hunger for food or thirst for water, but a hunger to hear the Word of God.
- 24 Wed** Mt 5:17-37 Jesus said: If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with them and then come back and present your offering.
- 25 Thu** Lk 1:26-38 Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.
- 26 Fri** 2 Co 5:1-7 Paul writes: We advance by faith, not by sight.
- 27 Sat** Pr 3:3-6 Trust in God with all your heart and do not rely upon your own understanding.
- 28 SUN** Jn 8:1-11 Jesus said to the woman who had been brought before him: "Where are those who were accusing you? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir", she said. "Neither do I condemn you", said Jesus, "Go, and sin no more."
- 29 Mon** Ph 4:4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near.
- 30 Tue** Mt 21:33-43 Jesus said: Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing and we marvel at it?"
- 31 Wed** Is 26:19 Isaiah said: You who dwell in the dust, wake up and sing for joy: your dead will live.

Jesus our peace, you call each one of us to follow you. To whom else would we go but to you, Christ? You have the words that give life to our hearts.

Praised be the Holy Spirit, who is present in the depths of our being and burns away the sufferings of our life in the fire of his presence.

4 SUN PALM SUNDAY
Lk 19:28-40
As Jesus came into Jerusalem, the crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out: Blessed is the one who comes as king in the name of the Lord!

5 Mon
Is 54:10
God says: Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, my faithful love for you will not be shaken.

6 Tue
Ws 1:11-15
God did not make death and takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. God created all things for life.

1 Thu
Ph 2:1-11
Taking the nature of a servant, Christ became as human beings are. And he humbled himself still further, remaining faithful to the point of death, and death on a cross. Therefore God has exalted him, and has given him the name that is above all other names.

2 Fri
Rm 14:7-15
While we live, as when we die, we belong to the Lord. For Christ died and returned to life that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

3 Sat
Rm 12:9-13
Paul writes: Let your love be sincere, clinging to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection.

11 SUN EASTER DAY
Jn 20:1-9
When Jesus' disciple entered the empty tomb, he saw and believed.

12 Mon
Jn 3:13-17
God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

13 Tue
Jm 1:17-27
God gave us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created.

14 Wed
Ps 10:14-18
You hear the desire of the humble, Lord; you encourage them and listen to their cry.

15 Thu
Ep 3:7-12
Paul writes: Through our faith in Christ Jesus, we can approach God with complete confidence.

16 Fri
Mk 6:45-52
When they saw Jesus walking on the water, the disciples were terrified. But at once he spoke to them saying, "Have courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

17 Sat
Jn 10:1-10
Jesus said: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

18 SUN
Jn 20:19-31
The Risen Christ breathed upon his disciples and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.

19 Mon
1 Co 2:1-5
Paul writes: I did not come among you with eloquence or wise arguments to announce the mystery of God. I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ crucified, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

20 Tue
Lk 6:17-23
Jesus said: Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

21 Wed
Tt 2:11-14
Christ Jesus gave his life for us in order to redeem us from our faults and to purify a people to be his very own.

22 Thu
Ep 5:8-14
You are light in the Lord. Live as children of light; for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.

23 Fri
Is 40:25-28
The Lord says: Why do you complain, my people, saying, "My way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is disregarded by God"? Do you not know? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the world, who does not tire or grow weary.

24 Sat
Jn 11:1-45
Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.

25 SUN
Jn 21:15-17
Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter replied, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

26 Mon
Col 3:1-5
Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

27 Tue
Mt 13:31-32
Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which someone took and sowed in their field. Of all seeds it is the smallest, yet once it has grown it is the biggest of plants.

28 Wed
Lk 24:13-35
Having recognised the Risen Christ, the disciples of Emmaus said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

29 Thu
Mk 9:30-37
Jesus said: Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.

30 Fri
Jn 5:24-27
Jesus said: Whoever listens to my words and believes in the one who sent me has passed from death to life.

APRIL

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Living in communion with God leads us to live in communion with others. The closer we come to the Gospel, the closer we come to one another. The Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément wrote, "The more someone becomes a person of prayer the more they become a person who is responsible. Prayer does not set us free from the tasks of this world: it makes us even more responsible. In fact, nothing shows more responsibility than to pray. This can take the concrete form of being present with those who are suffering from being abandoned by others, or from poverty—as is the case, for example, with the brothers of Taizé who live in deprived areas in other continents—, but it calls us as well to be inventive, to be creators in every sphere, including that of economics, that of a global civilization, of culture...." (*Taizé, A Meaning to Life*, Chicago: GIA Publications, 1997.)

1 When he was very young, at age 1, the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined the expression "Christ existing as the Church." He wrote that "in Christ humankind is really drawn into communion with God" (*Sanctorum communio*, Berlin 1930).

A contemplative gaze perceives signs of the Gospel in the simplest events.

It discerns Christ's presence even in the most abandoned individual.¹⁰

It discovers in the universe the radiant beauties of creation.

Many people ask themselves, "What does God want of me?" When we read the Gospel, we understand. God asks us to be a reflection of his presence in every situation. God invites us to make life beautiful for those he entrusts to us.

Those who attempt to respond to a call from God for their entire lifetime can say this prayer:

Holy Spirit, though it may well be that no one is built to live out a yes for ever, you come to kindle in me a source of light. At those times when the yes and the no clash, you shed light on my hesitations and doubts.

Holy Spirit, you give me the strength to consent to my own limits. If there is an element of frailty within me, may your presence come to transfigure it.

And then we are led to dare to say yes, a yes that will carry us a long way.

A yes that is transparent trust.

A yes that is the love in all our loving.

Christ is communion. He did not come to earth to start one more religion, but to offer to all a communion in him.¹¹ His disciples are called to be a humble leaven of trust and peace within humanity.

In that unique communion which is the Church, God offers us all we need in order to go to the wellsprings: the Gospel, the Eucharist, the peace of forgiveness... And Christ's holiness is no longer something unattainable; it is there, close at hand.

Four centuries after Christ, an African Christian named Augustine wrote, "Love, and say it with your life."

When communion among Christians is a life and not a

theory, it radiates hope. Still more, it can help sustain the indispensable search for world peace.

How, then, could Christians still remain divided?

Over the years, the ecumenical vocation has fostered an invaluable exchange of views. This dialogue is the first-fruits of a living communion among Christians.¹²

Communion is the touchstone. It comes to birth first of all in the heart of hearts of every Christian, in silence and in love.¹³

In the long history of Christians, at one point multitudes found that they were divided, sometimes without even knowing why. Today it is essential to do everything in our power so that as many Christians as possible—who are often innocent of the divisions—may discover that they are in communion.¹⁴

Vast numbers of people have a desire for reconciliation that touches the very depths of their soul. They aspire to this inexhaustible joy: one love, one heart, one and the same communion.¹⁵

Holy Spirit, come and place in our hearts the desire to move forward towards a communion; you are the one who leads us to it.

On Easter evening, Jesus went with two of his disciples as they walked to the village of Emmaus. They did not realize at the time that he was walking alongside them.¹⁶

We too experience times when we are unable to realize that, by the Holy Spirit, Christ remains at our side.

Tirelessly he walks beside us. He illuminates our souls with unexpected light. And we discover that, even though some darkness may remain in us, in each person there is above all the mystery of his presence.

Let us try to keep in mind one thing we can rely on. What is that? Christ says to each person, "I love you with everlasting love. I will never leave you. By the Holy Spirit, I will be with you always."¹⁷

12 Reflecting on the ecumenical vocation, the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius IV, wrote recently from Damascus, "We have an urgent need for prophetic initiatives in order to bring ecumenism out of the twists and turns in which I fear it is getting stuck. We have an urgent need for prophets and saints to help our Churches to be converted by mutual forgiveness." The patriarch called for "emphasizing the language of communion rather than that of jurisdiction." Last year, while receiving in Rome leaders of the Orthodox Church of Greece, Pope John Paul II said, "With the saints, we contemplate the ecumenism of holiness which will lead us finally towards full communion, which is neither absorption nor fusion, but an encounter in truth and in love."

13 Reconciliation begins in the present moment, within each person. Lived in the heart of a believer, reconciliation gains credibility and can lead to a spirit of reconciliation in that communion of love which is the Church. This road presupposes that there be no humiliation for anyone.

14 Could the Church give signs of great openness, so wide as to let it become clear that those who used to be divided in the past are no longer separated, but are already living in communion? A significant step towards reconciliation will have been accomplished to the extent that a life of communion, already a reality in certain places throughout the world, is taken explicitly into account. It will take courage to recognize this and draw the necessary conclusions. Written documents will come later. Does not putting the emphasis on written documents in the end cause us to lose sight of the Gospel's call to be reconciled without delay?

15 See Philippians 2:2.

16 See Luke 24:13-35.

17 See Jeremiah 31:3 and John 14:16-18.